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Information Bulletin

Grade 6 English Language Arts 1995-96

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

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This bulletin contains general information about the Provincial Student Assessment Program and information specific to the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. **It replaces all previous bulletins.**

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October 1995

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General Information

The Provincial Student Assessment Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*, which is mailed each fall to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts will be administered during the last week of May. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests will be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the

test on the same day. Superintendents approve a local schedule for achievement test administration within the dates provided. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period most, if not all, absentees can be tested upon their return to school. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

The tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Français 6^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Français 9^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)

Students in French Immersion Programs

All students in French Immersion programs must write the French form of the achievement tests. Alberta Education will send a checklist to schools by January requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-February.

Marking Achievement Tests Locally

Teachers will be able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year end assessment, as well as for planning instruction.

Reporting the Results

Each school jurisdiction will receive a district report and individual school reports regarding their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staff (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

An individual profile for each student will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We also expect that these reports will be shared with parents.

Provincial results for each subject and grade will be made public in September, in documents titled *Assessment Highlights*.

Broadened Assessment Initiatives

The Student Evaluation Branch has developed additional instruments to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests alone can provide. These instruments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis. The following assessments will be given in 1996:

Grade 3

- problem-solving activities in mathematics

Grade 6

- "whole book" performance-based assessment in language arts

Grade 9

- problem-solving activities in mathematics

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned English Language Arts by the end of Grade 6. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 6 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 6 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 6 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured. By comparing actual results with provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is, in fact, "good enough."

Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 6 English Language Arts should be able to deal with a familiar idea in writing, such as the narration of a personal experience. On occasion, these students should be able to deal with complex and/or original thoughts. They are expected to produce work using clear words and expressions, and relevant, general details. They should be able to organize concrete, factual materials containing straightforward ideas. They are expected to recognize increasingly complex techniques of literary structure and organization, such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, and flashback.

Grade 6 English Language Arts Assessment

This assessment has two new prompts that are not repeated from previous years.

The Grade 6 English Language Arts Assessment is composed of two parts.

Part A: Writing consists of two writing assignments designed to be completed in two hours. Included in the total period is time for discussion before the narrative writing, and planning, drafting, and revising of both the narrative and functional writing. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Part B: Reading (multiple choice) is designed to be completed in 60 minutes. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish. It consists of 50 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media. *Part B: Reading* has one booklet containing reading passages and questions. Answers are to be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

Students may use a dictionary and a thesaurus when completing **only Part A: Writing**.

Part A: Writing

Section I of the *Part A: Writing* assignment consists of a picture and a prompt that students will be asked to respond to in the form of a story.

Section II of the *Part A: Writing* assignment requires the students to write for a specific audience and to fulfill a specified purpose within a given context. Specified purposes may include letters of invitation to guest speakers, requests for information, and congratulatory or thank-you letters. This part of the assignment tests students' writing skills using "real world" situations. The writers' ability to adjust content, order, tone, and diction to the situation is being tested.

It is expected that students meeting the *acceptable standard* are able to read relatively short, simple selections of fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry, and to correctly identify the main idea, sequence of events, key details, author's purpose, and imagery used. These students should be somewhat able to associate meanings of specific words and expressions in context. It is expected that these students can analyze details and synthesize ideas in a familiar context. They should be able to consistently answer literal (idea, detail, and relationship) questions. Occasionally, they should be able to understand ideas, details, and relationships that are implied in a reading selection.

Standard of Excellence

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* are expected to confidently and competently deal with writing that requires complex and original thought. They should be able to develop and organize abstract, complex materials. It is expected that these students can consistently establish an appropriate focus for communication and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able not only to recognize complex techniques of literary structure and/or organization, but also to apply them to their own writing.

It is expected that students meeting the *standard of excellence* can effectively deal with abstract and complex details and ideas found in longer, sophisticated selections of fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry. These students should be able to read and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives. It is expected that they are able to analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of materials. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able to readily answer literal as well as implied idea, detail, and relationship questions.

Section I includes pages labelled Planning and First Draft. Students are asked to produce only one copy of their work. They are encouraged to make revisions and corrections directly on this copy. Because of the limited time available for achievement testing, it is felt that students benefit most from spending the majority of their time in composing and revising their work, rather than perfecting a “good copy.” In the past, when both draft and final copies were required, most students would just recopy their original work, paying special attention to neatness rather than to improving the content or overall quality of what they had originally written. What we now expect is a good first draft from students.

Section II includes a page labelled Planning and two lined pages for a letter, followed by a blank envelope that is to be addressed properly.

Important Information to Note!

At the beginning of the test, students will be given time to discuss both prompts with classmates in groups of two to four, or to think alone about them, and to plan their responses before beginning to write.

In the past, many students have written papers that were “off topic.” Please encourage your students to address the prompt.

Students may do their writing using a word processor. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the draft policy in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

Blueprint for Part A: Narrative Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section I of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Events and/or actions should be plausible and appropriate to the student's purpose. The student should be able to describe characters and setting using details that are appropriate for the context established.</p>	<p>The narrative writing assignment follows a picture and a writing prompt that will be read aloud to students. The students are to respond to the prompt in the form of a story.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p>
<p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified composition that achieves his/her purpose for writing.</p>		<p>Meets the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.</p>		<p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve his/her purpose.</p>		<p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.</p>		<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Blueprint for Part A: Functional Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section II of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) The student should be able to consider the audience and be able to establish a purpose, incorporating significant information using precise and appropriate details.</p>	<p>The functional writing assignment requires the student to write to a specified audience in the context of a letter. They are expected to correctly address a blank envelope as well.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p>
<p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified letter that achieves his/her purpose for writing.</p>		<p>Meets the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.</p>		<p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve his/her purpose.</p>		<p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.</p>		<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Marking

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using scoring guides like those in this bulletin, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Discrepancies will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual student results can be reported.

All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July. The Student Evaluation Branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 170 Grade 6 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 6 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking.

Markers will be contacted in May and the list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet before the marking session.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process in which some teachers who are selected for marking are asked to make judgements about the achievement test to answer the question of whether province-wide performance is good enough. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to the *Provincial Student Assessment Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

Sample Writing Assignments

The sample assignments that follow are similar in format and content to the assignments on the 1996 Grade 6 English Language Arts *Part A: Writing* component. Adequate space for planning and writing both sections will be provided in the writing booklet. These sample assignments are for classroom use.

Grade 6 Achievement Test
English Language Arts
Part A: Writing

To The Teacher:

Read this page and pages 9 and 16 to your students.

Description

- This test consists of **two** sections.
- You will have 10 minutes in total for discussion about the prompt in each section.
- In Section I, there is a writing prompt and a picture for you to write about.
- We suggest that you take about 70 minutes to complete section I.
- When you have finished Section I, go on to section II.
- Section II, describes a situation that you must respond to in letter format.
- We suggest that you leave approximately 40 minutes to write the letter.
- ***Time: 2 hours. You may take additional time of up to 30 minutes to complete the test.***

Instructions

- Before beginning to write, you will have 10 minutes to talk with your classmates (in groups of two to four) about the writing assignments, or to think about them alone.
- Jot down your ideas and/or make a plan before you write. Do this on the ***Ideas/Planning*** page.
- Write in blue or black ink on the lined pages provided.
- You are to do only one copy of your writing. Remember that you may neatly make changes and corrections directly on this writing.
- You may use an English Language dictionary and/or a thesaurus.
- Your work will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions**).

Sample Writing Assignment—Narrative Writing

On page 10, you will see a picture and a statement that might help you use the picture to imagine something.

Use your imagination to write a story that the picture has helped you think about.

When writing your story, be sure to:

- **consider** your audience
- **focus** on your purpose
- **organize** your writing appropriately in sentences and paragraphs
- **budget** your time
- **proofread** and correct your work

She knew it was time to send them back. The caterpillars softly wiggled in her hand, spelling out “good-bye.”



Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a context
- uses events and/or actions that are appropriate for the established context
- uses specific details (of characters, setting, actions, events, etc.)
- demonstrates an awareness of audience

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context is clearly established and sustained. • The events and/or actions are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are specific and consistently effective. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest and is creative and/or original.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context is clearly established and generally sustained. • The events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are specific and generally effective. • The writing engages and generally holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context is established but may not be sustained. • The majority of the events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are appropriate, general, and may be predictable. • The writing generally holds the reader's interest.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context is vaguely established and may not be sustained. • Some of the events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are few and/or may be repetitive. • The writing does not hold the reader's interest.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context may be unclear and/or not sustained. • There are few events and/or actions. • Supporting details are scant. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

Organization

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- introduces the topic/subject
- follows a coherent order
- establishes connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters
- brings closure to the writing

<p>Meets the Standard of Excellence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is purposeful, interesting, and clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are consistently maintained. • The ending ties events and/or actions together.
<p>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs, in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are maintained. • The ending provides an appropriate finish for events and/or actions.
<p>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction directly presents information about events, characters, and/or setting. • Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter occasionally. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are generally maintained. • The ending is predictable and/or contrived, but is connected to events and/or actions.
<p>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction provides little information. • The arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are unclear and/or inconsistent or missing. • The ending is predictable and/or contrived, and may not be connected to events and/or actions.
<p>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction may be confusing. • The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are missing. • The ending, if present, is unconnected to the events and/or actions.
<p>INS INSUFFICIENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Sentence Structure

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
- variety of sentence beginnings

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are consistently effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are varied.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are often varied.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled, but may occasionally impede the meaning. • Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and/or varied. • Some variety of sentence beginnings is evident.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure sometimes lacks control, and this can impede the meaning. • There is little variation of sentence type and length. • There is little variety of sentence beginnings.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure generally lacks control, and this severely impedes the meaning. • There is no variation of sentence type or length. • There is no variety of sentence beginnings.
INS • INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Vocabulary

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer uses

- words and phrases accurately and effectively
- specific words and expressions

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and effectively. • Specific words and expressions are used to create vivid images and/or to enrich details.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and often effectively. • Specific words and expressions are frequently used to create images and/or to add clarity to details.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used appropriately. • General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words and expressions would have been more effective.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used appropriately. • General, rather than specific, words and expressions predominate.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are sometimes appropriately. • General words and expressions that convey only vague meanings are used.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Conventions

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indenting for new speakers, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject–verb, pronoun antecedent, pronoun reference)
- clarity and flow of the communication

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is enhanced because it is essentially error free. • Errors, if present, do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained because it contains only minor convention errors. • Errors that are present do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is maintained through generally correct use of conventions. • Errors that are present rarely reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is weakened by the frequently incorrect use of conventions. • Errors often reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of the communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is limited by the consistently incorrect use of conventions. • Errors severely reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of the communication.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Sample Writing Assignment—Functional Writing

Read the information below and complete the assignment that follows.

The Situation

This year in social studies, one of the topics you may have studied is China. Imagine that as a class assignment you will have to do research on something about China that you are particularly interested in and prepare a report to present to the class. You will need to get a variety of information from a number of different sources for this assignment.

The Assignment:

Write a letter to John Doe, the director of the agency listed below, requesting the information that you will need to do this assignment.

In your letter, **be sure to**

- **describe** the topic you have chosen
- **include** the purpose of your research
- **explain** why you are personally interested in this aspect of the country
- **request** that the information be sent to Chris Jones's address (see below)
- **sign** your letter Chris Jones (**do not** sign your own name)
- **follow** the letter format
- **address** the blank envelope provided

Agency and Director

China-Canada Trade and Investments, #238, 10835–120 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5H 3P9
John Doe, Director

Chris Jones's Address

123 Main Street, Meyer, Alberta T6Y 7G7

Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose
- incorporates significant information
- uses precise and appropriate details
- demonstrates an awareness of audience

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose and the writer's situation are clearly established. • Significant information is presented to support the purpose. • The information is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is clearly and effectively sustained.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose and the writer's situation are established. • Important information is presented to support the purpose. • The information is substantiated by appropriate details that fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is clearly sustained.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose is established. • Sufficient information is presented to support the purpose. • The information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is generally sustained.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose is vaguely established. • Essential information may not support the purpose. • The information is supported by few significant and/or relevant details that only partially fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is evident but not sustained.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose is unclear. • Essential information to support the purpose is missing. • If details are present, they are inappropriate, providing poor support for the information; thus, the purpose is not fulfilled. • Little awareness of audience is evident.
INS :: INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Organization

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- introduces the purpose of the writing
- follows a coherent order for requested information
- brings closure to the writing

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is effective, interesting, and clearly establishes the purpose and direction for the writing. • Requested information is arranged in a purposeful and effective order and coherence is consistently maintained. • The conclusion brings effective closure to the writing.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction clearly establishes the purpose and the direction for the writing. • Requested information is arranged in a purposeful order and coherence is generally maintained. • The conclusion brings appropriate closure to the writing.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction generally establishes the purpose and direction for the writing. • Requested information is arranged in a mechanical order, although coherence may falter occasionally. • The conclusion brings adequate closure to the writing.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction provides little information. • The arrangement of requested information is not clearly discernible and coherence falters frequently. • The conclusion is abrupt or awkward.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction may be confusing. • The arrangement of requested information is haphazard and incoherent. • The conclusion, if present, is inappropriate.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Sentence Structure

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
- variety of sentence beginnings

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are consistently effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are varied.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are often varied.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled, but may occasionally impede the meaning. • Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and varied. • Some variation of sentence beginnings is evident.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure sometimes lacks control, and this can impede the meaning. • There is little variation of sentence type and length. • There is little variation of sentence beginnings.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure generally lacks control, and this severely impedes the meaning. • There is no variation of sentence type or length. • There is no variation of sentence beginnings.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Vocabulary

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer uses

- words and phrases accurately and effectively
- uses specific words and expressions, appropriate to a request made in a business letter

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used consistently accurately and effectively. • Specific words and expressions appropriate to the context are consistently used.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and often effectively. • Specific words and expressions appropriate to the context are frequently used.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used appropriately. • General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words and expressions appropriate to the context, would have been more effective.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used appropriately. • General, rather than specific, words and expressions, which are not always appropriate to the context, predominate.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are sometimes misused. • General words and expressions that are inappropriate to the context, and that convey only vague meanings, are used.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Conventions

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indenting for new speakers, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject-verb, pronoun antecedent, pronoun reference)
- application of business letter and envelope format skills
- clarity and flow of the communication

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is enhanced because it is essentially error free. • The letter and envelope are essentially free from format errors. • Errors, if present, do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained because it has only minor convention errors. • The letter and envelope contain few format errors. • Errors that are present do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is maintained through generally correct use of conventions. • The letter and envelope contain occasional format errors. • Errors that are present rarely reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is weakened by the frequently incorrect use of conventions. • The letter and envelope contain frequent errors in format. • Errors often reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of the communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is limited by the consistently incorrect use of conventions. • The letter and envelope contain numerous and glaring format errors. • Errors severely reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of the communication.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 50 multiple-choice questions* based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media.

The sample selections and questions on pages 24 to 29 appeared on the June 1995 Achievement Test (all other questions on this test are secured). These released questions, along with questions from previous bulletins, can be used to prepare students for the current Achievement Test.

These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1996 test, although the emphasis will be different. The blueprint for the Part B of the achievement test, showing the approximate number of questions in each reporting category, appears on the next page.

Development

Reading selections are chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 6 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 6 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions relating to each reading selection are arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the student's ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

** All Grade 6 Achievement Tests will consist of 50 questions.*

Reading Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

Part B: Reading Grade 6 Language Arts Achievement Test, June 1996

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to recognize explicit and inferred or implicit relationships among settings, events, characters, and ideas, and identify growth or change in fictional characters.	6	7	13	26
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to identify genre and elements of story structure, recognize the author's techniques, determine the author's purpose, and use text and typographical features to assist reading.	2	6	8	16
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of the more common types of figurative language.	6	7	13	26
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from the entire reading selection.	4	12	16	32
Total Number of Questions	18	32	50	100
Percent of Test	36	64	100	100

Sample Reading Questions

I. Read the journal entries below and answer questions 1 to 6.

I'VE BEEN TO THE TOP OF THE WORLD

These are personal journal entries written by Jason Wissink, aged 12, the youngest person to reach the North Pole.

DAY ONE: RESOLUTE

- When all 14 members of our tour group met at Resolute airport, our arctic gear was piled halfway to the ceiling. We weren't the only Pole-bound travellers leaving Resolute that day. A second group planned to fly to the north end of Ellesmere Island and then take two months to *walk* to the Pole! The intrepid group that my Dad led flew there—in three days. That's more my style!

DAY TWO: NORTH MAGNETIC POLE

- We flew out of Resolute in a ski-shod Twin otter. Destination: Eureka, with a detour to the North Magnetic Pole. It's not the same as the North Pole. It's the spot on the earth where compasses point, and it's always moving. Someone jokingly said that the North Magnetic Pole is a huge mountain of iron and that's why compasses all point there. But when we flew over it, all I could see was rough ice—too rough to land on.

- The plan was to fly to Eureka on Ellesmere Island, spend the night at the weather station and get more fuel for our plane before flying on to the Pole the next day. But guess what? The walking expedition got to Eureka before us. No, they didn't walk there! While we were having fun flying circles around the North Magnetic Pole, they'd flown straight to Eureka and grabbed all the beds! Our group had to fly back to Resolute.

DAY THREE: EUREKA

- Finally, after cooling our heels all day while a storm blew itself out, we flew back to the Eureka weather station. After dinner, we followed a wolf trail from the bunkhouse to the garbage dump. Soon three wolves were circling us, trying to get downwind so they could catch our scent. Dad told us they weren't sizing us up for food, they were just being wary.

It was midnight by the time we finished our walk. The sun was still up and I was too excited to sleep. North Pole Day was almost here!

25 DAY FOUR: THE NORTH POLE

Not one, but two Twin Otters were sitting on the runway this morning. Each plane had to carry seven people and extra drums of fuel in case of an emergency.

At last, the co-pilot yelled over his shoulder, "The North Pole is directly below."

- There were many water-filled leads* below us and I was afraid that the plane would break through the ice when it landed. To take my mind off this, Dad joked that each time we'd circled the Pole looking for a place to land, we'd flown around the world. If that's the case, I've been around the world seven times!

- We found a place to land not far from the Pole. I was second off the plane, clutching my big Canadian flag. I planted the flag and Dad took some photographs of us all. He said our group was special because it included the youngest person (me) and the oldest person (an 89-year-old man from Japan) to ever reach the Pole.

Jason Wissink

*lead—a channel in an ice field

1. The North Magnetic Pole is different from the North Pole because the North Magnetic Pole is
 - A. very cold year-round
 - B. a huge mountain of iron
 - C. hard to find with a compass
 - D. a constantly changing location

2. Jason and his group could not stay in Eureka on Day Two because
 - A. their plane ran out of fuel
 - B. all their equipment had not arrived
 - C. the bad weather forced them to turn back
 - D. other Pole-bound travellers got there first

3. The phrase “cooling our heels” (line 19) means that the group was
 - A. spending time waiting
 - B. walking in the snow
 - C. finding it hard to stay warm
 - D. pacing nervously before the flight

4. The wolves were circling the group (line 21) because they were
 - A. starving for food
 - B. getting ready to attack
 - C. trying to catch the people’s scent
 - D. looking for shelter from the storm

5. The word “wary” (line 22) means
 - A. timid
 - B. cautious
 - C. aggressive
 - D. bothersome

6. On the trip, Jason was afraid when he thought that the
 - A. plane would run out of fuel
 - B. plane would break through the ice
 - C. group had nowhere to stay the first night
 - D. other travellers would get to the Pole first



II. Read the play below and answer questions 7 to 12.

IS THERE LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS?

SETTING: *A conference room. The CHIEF SCIENTIST and other SCIENTISTS are seated at a conference table, their backs to the audience.*

CHIEF SCIENTIST (*Rising with back to audience*): Ladies and gentlemen. Please come to order. I have called you here today to make an important announcement. I am sorry to tell you that after exhaustive studies, we have come to the conclusion that there cannot possibly be any life on the planet nearest us.

- 5 **1ST SCIENTIST**: But what about the changes in color from white to green that have been observed on the planet's surface? Don't these indicate weather changes and some kind of atmosphere?

CHIEF SCIENTIST: All tests show that there is some atmosphere on the planet, but it is not enough to sustain life as we know it.

- 10 **2ND SCIENTIST**: Then how do you account for the ditches or canals that have been seen with our telescopes?

CHIEF SCIENTIST: Latest viewings indicate that these are merely natural ground formations, and there is no proof whatever that they are made by any living beings.

3RD SCIENTIST: Then we must conclude that the flying saucer stories are all hoaxes?*

- 15 **CHIEF SCIENTIST**: No, of course not. Most of these sightings have perfectly logical, scientific explanations, and the rest are the direct result of mass hysteria.

4TH SCIENTIST: Then all the strange sounds picked up on the radio receivers come from our own transmitters or are produced by atmospheric pressure?

CHIEF SCIENTIST: I'm afraid so.

- 20 **5TH SCIENTIST**: I, for one, am extremely disappointed. I've always been sure we had neighbours on other planets, or at least on the one nearest to us. Perhaps not life as we know it, but some kind of intelligent life, totally unknown to us.

- CHIEF SCIENTIST**: I am going to adjourn this meeting. I can see no point in discussing this matter further. The tests have been so conclusive** that any intelligent person must
25 accept the fact that there is no life on—

ALL (*Turning to audience to reveal weird masks or makeup*): Earth! (*Curtain*)

*hoaxes—something false

**conclusive—definite

Marion Lane

7. The setting of a play

- A. outlines what will happen
- B. introduces all the characters
- C. tells where the action takes place
- D. tells what will happen at the beginning

8. The phrase “exhaustive studies” (line 3) means that the studies were

- A. complete
- B. scientific
- C. important
- D. interesting

9. The chief scientist concludes that the nearest planet cannot sustain life as we know it because there is evidence that

- A. the planet experiences extreme weather changes
- B. there is not enough atmosphere to sustain life
- C. the planet surface changes from white to green
- D. no strange sounds come from the planet over the radio receivers

10. The ditches and canals are thought to be

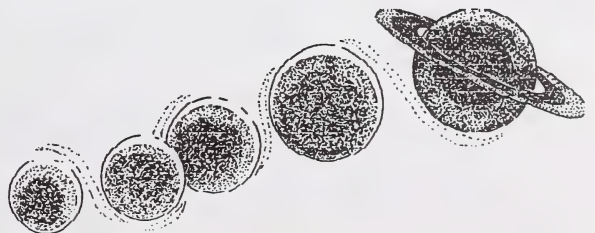
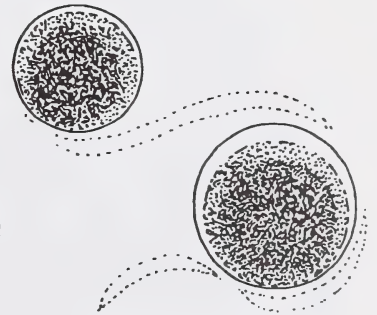
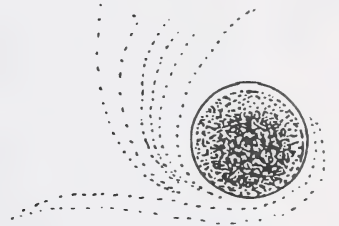
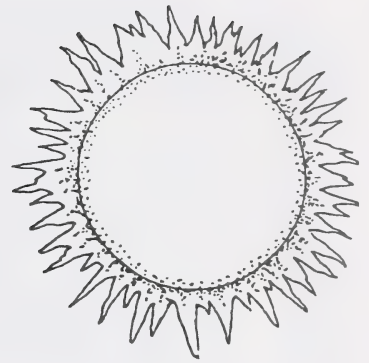
- A. false sightings
- B. transport systems
- C. natural formations
- D. man-made features

11. When the scientists cannot find life on the nearest planet, they feel

- A. angry
- B. uncertain
- C. frustrated
- D. disappointed

12. The word “adjourn” used in line 23 means

- A. end
- B. delay
- C. address
- D. continue



III. Read the legend below and answer questions 13 to 18.

HOW GLOOSKAP FOUND THE SUMMER

Long ago a mighty tribe of Indians lived near the sunrise, and they called themselves Wawaniki—Children of Light. Glooskap was their master. He was kind to his people and did many great deeds for them.

Once in Glooskap's day it grew extremely cold. Snow and ice covered everything.

- 5 Fires would not give enough warmth. The corn would not grow. His people were perishing from cold and famine.

Glooskap set forth for the far north where all was ice. Here in a wigwam he found the great giant Winter. It was Winter's icy breath that had frozen the land.

- 10 Glooskap entered the wigwam and sat down. Winter gave him a pipe, and as they smoked the giant told tales of olden times when he reigned everywhere and all the land was silent, white, and beautiful. His frost charm fell upon Glooskap and as the giant talked on, Glooskap fell asleep. For six months he slept like a bear, then the charm left him. He was too strong for it and awoke.

- 15 Soon now, Glooskap's talebearer, the Loon, brought him strange news. He described a country far to the south where it was always warm. There lived the all-powerful Summer who could easily overcome the giant Winter. To save his people from cold and famine and death, Glooskap decided to find her.

- 20 Far off to the southern seashores he went. He sang the magic song which whales obey and up came an old friend—a whale who served as his carrier when he wished to go out to sea.

Glooskap got on the whale's back and for many days they traveled together. Each day the water grew warmer and the air softer and sweeter, for it came from spicy shores. The odors were no longer those of salt, but of fruits and flowers.

- 25 The whale hurried on accordingly until she was close to land. Glooskap, leaping from her head, was able to walk ashore on dry land.

Far inland strode Glooskap and found it warmer at every step. In the forest he came upon a beautiful woman, dancing in the center of a group of young girls. Her long brown hair was crowned with flowers and her arms filled with blossoms. She was Summer.

- 30 Glooskap knew that here at last was the one who by her charms could melt old Winter's heart. He leaped to catch her and would not let her go. Together they journeyed the long way back to the lodge of old Winter.

- Winter welcomed Glooskap but he planned to freeze him to sleep again. This time, however, Glooskap did the talking. His charm proved the stronger one and soon sweat began to run down Winter's face. He knew that his power was gone and the charm of Frost
35 broken. His icy tent melted away.

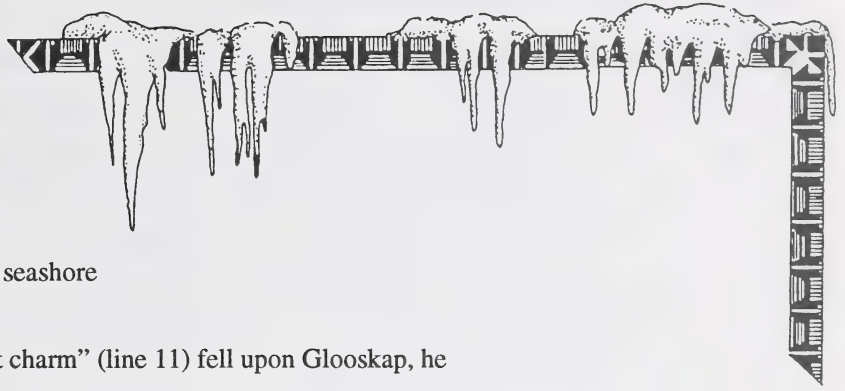
Summer now used her own special power and everything awoke. The grass grew green and the snow ran down the rivers, carrying away the dead leaves. Old Winter wept to see his power taken away.

- 40 But Summer said, "Now that I have proved I am more powerful than you, I give you all the country to the far north for your own, and there I shall never disturb you. Six months of every year you may return to Glooskap's country and reign as before, but you are to be less severe with your power. During the other six months, I will come back from the South and rule the land."

Charles G. Leland

13. The Wawaniki lived

- A. in the forest
- B. in the far north
- C. near the sunrise
- D. on the southern seashore



14. When Winter's "frost charm" (line 11) fell upon Glooskap, he

- A. fell asleep
- B. became angry
- C. became frozen
- D. left the wigwam

15. The word "talebearer" (line 14) means

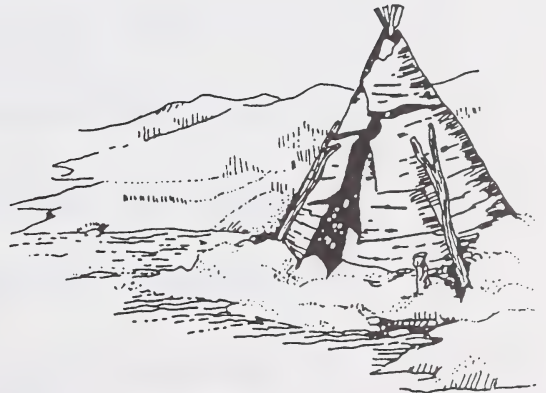
- A. pet bird
- B. servant
- C. teller of legends
- D. information giver

16. Glooskap decided to find Summer because

- A. Summer was beautiful
- B. Loon told him to find her
- C. he wanted to save his people
- D. he wanted to live where it was always warm

17. Glooskap contacted the whale by

- A. calling to her
- B. singing a magic song
- C. sending his talebearer
- D. using his special powers



18. When Summer told Winter to be "less severe" with his power (lines 41–42), she meant that he should

- A. share his power
- B. go away for six months
- C. not be so cold and harsh
- D. agree with her decision

Key and Descriptors for Sample Reading Questions

Question	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard	Examples of Assessment Standard*
1	D	Informational	Main ideas/details	Locate key details about physical location in a passage	A
2	D	Informational	Organization of ideas	Understand an implied cause/effect relationship in a passage	A
3	A	Informational	Associating meanings	Understand the connotation of a phrase beyond its literal meaning in a passage	A
4	C	Informational	Main ideas/details	Use key details to infer character motivation in a passage	A
5	B	Informational	Associating meanings	Infer the meaning of a words from its context in a passage	A
6	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Infer character motivation by synthesizing information in a passage	A
7	C	Narrative/poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand the basic purpose for setting in a play	A
8	A	Narrative/poetic	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of an expression from its context in a play	E
9	B	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character motvation in a play	A
10	C	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of scene in a play	A
11	D	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character motvation in a play	A
12	A	Narrative/poetic	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of a word from its context in a play	A
13	C	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of setting in a passage	E

Question	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard	Examples of Assessment Standard*
14	A	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character in a passage	A
15	D	Narrative/poetic	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of a word from its context in a passage	A
16	C	Narrative/poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand a directly stated cause/effect relationship in a passage	A
17	B	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details in a passage	A
18	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information in a passage	E

*A—Students meeting the acceptable standard should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

E—In addition to answering the questions identified for the acceptable standard, students meeting the standard of excellence should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

Preparing Students for the Assessment

I strongly advocate preparing children to understand tests and testing through extensive class discussion about the makeup of the test and how to take it, and then adequate practice to find out their own particular weaknesses in approaching tests.

—Graves, p. 183

We hope that teachers will share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Have students do the sample questions included in this bulletin. Then, have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

In 1989 and 1993, the Student Evaluation Branch published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*. These samples came from the student responses given on the 1988 and 1992 Language Arts Achievement Tests. Share these samples and the accompanying commentaries with students.

Also, familiarize students with the scoring guides in this bulletin. With instruction, students may be able to use these guides effectively when evaluating their own writing or that of peers.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Plan their available time carefully. We suggest that they use all the time available to them to carefully *read* the assignment and *think* about what they are being asked to do, to *plan* their writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent, and to *proofread* their writing. They will have two hours to complete the assignment.

Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignment asks them to do. The time they spend in reading and thinking about the assignment is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words in the assignment helps them to focus on what is expected.

Plan their writing using the pages provided. They should choose a planning strategy that helps them to focus their ideas. They may want to try:

- webbing
- using a chart
- listing (main ideas, character, etc.)
- using a plot outline (diagram)
- using a RAFTS model (role, audience, focus, topic, strong verb)

Use their reference materials. They are allowed the use of a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing Part A. Students should use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that they want to use but are not completely sure about and ensure that they spell words correctly by looking them up. A thesaurus can be useful if they need to find a more precise word for the context they are developing, but students should be careful not to overuse a thesaurus.

Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing.

- Awareness of audience (appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
- Completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill purpose)
- Relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
- Clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)

Proofread their work and correct errors directly on their first draft. Students should double-space, if they think it will allow them to make corrections more easily.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material using the strategy that works best for them. They should either

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they try any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection; *or*
- read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions they will need to answer.

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take them back through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage, and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

Consider all forms of information provided. Information will be presented not only in words but also in visual forms such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.

Take the time to reread the lines that are referred to in a question. Many questions contain quotations from the selection with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to reread the lines that are referenced and consider the meanings of these lines in both their immediate context in the selection and the context of the selection as a whole.

Read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that they think is best. Some of the questions are designed to test their ability to make a judgement. These questions will often include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems, such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the reading selection into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the reading selection.

Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to them fairly quickly, they may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use their judgement to select an answer from those that remain.

Parts of a Business Letter

The diagram illustrates the components of a business letter. It features a large rectangular frame representing the letter's layout. On the left side, a vertical line is labeled with a circled '4'. The main body of the letter is filled with horizontal lines. At the top right, there are three horizontal lines labeled with circled '1'. Below these, there are three more horizontal lines labeled with a circled '2'. Further down, there are three horizontal lines labeled with a circled '3'. At the bottom right, there are two horizontal lines labeled with circled '5' and '6' respectively.

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

Format of a Business Letter

The following information is provided because this is the first year that a functional piece of writing has been part of the achievement test. This information should help you as you prepare your students for the test.

There are three basic business letter formats. The block format that follows is the preferred format for the test. In this format, all parts of the letter run along the left side of the page. No paragraphs in the body are indented, but an extra space is left between paragraphs.

Parts of the Business Letter (see previous page)

1. Heading

The heading consists of your address and the date.

501 Spring Street
Regina SK R3T 4N7
January 3, 1996

2. Inside Address

The inside address consists of the name and address of the person to whom you are writing. It usually appears four lines below the heading if a word processor is used, or one line below if it is hand-written.

Sam Hunt, Director
The Knitting Mill
1409 3 Avenue
Toronto ON L3V 7O1

3. Salutation

The most traditional salutation or greeting for a business letter is *Dear* followed by Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Miss and the person's last name, and ending with a colon.

Dear Mr. Smith:
Dear Ms. Black:

Dear Mrs. Brown:

Dear Miss Green:

4. Body

The body is the main part of the letter in which you write what you have to say to the person. Skip one line after the salutation.

- Get to the point. After a brief greeting, get "down to business."
- Business letters are usually formal, so the language that you use should also be formal.

5. Closing

The closing is the ending to your letter. It appears in the bottom left corner of the letter, directly under the body. Only the first word in the closing should be capitalized. It is always followed by a comma.

Yours truly,
Sincerely,

6. Signature

The signature is your full name signed. Your signature should appear directly below the closing. It should always be written in ink.

7. Commonly Used Abbreviations for Provinces and Territories

Province	Symbol
Alberta	AB
British Columbia	BC
Manitoba	MB
New Brunswick	NB
Newfoundland	NF
Northwest Territories	NT
Nova Scotia	NS
Ontario	ON
Prince Edward Island	PE
Quebec	QC or PQ
Saskatchewan	SK
Yukon	YT

Addressing an Envelope

The diagram shows a rectangular envelope with a light gray background. In the top left corner, there are three horizontal lines for the return address, labeled with a circled '1'. In the center of the envelope, there are four horizontal lines for the mailing address, labeled with a circled '2'.

1. Return Address

The return address is the name and address of the person sending the letter. The return address appears in the top left corner of the envelope and consists of your name, street address, city or town, province, and postal code.

JEAN BROWN
13 SPRING RD
TORONTO ON L2R 3V6

2. Mailing Address

The mailing address is the name and address to which the letter is being sent. It always appears in the centre of the envelope. In a business letter, the address on the envelope is the same as the inside address of the letter. There may be separate lines for the title of the addressee (Editor, Director, President), the division or department the person works in, and the name of his or her company, business, or organization.

SAM HUNT
DIRECTOR
THE KNITTING MILL
1403 3 AVE
TORONTO ON L3V 7O1

Note: *Envelope format follows Canada Post's preferred guidelines, January 1994.*

Credits

Jason Wissink. "I've Been to the Top of the World." Reprinted from Owl Magazine by permission of the publisher, The Young Naturalist Foundation.

Marion Lane. "Is There Life on Other Planets?" from *Space and Science Plays for Young People*. Copyright © 1981 by Plays, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

Charles G. Leland. "How Glooskap Found the Summer" from *The Faber Book of North American Legends*, edited by Virginia Haviland (London: Faber and Faber Limited). Reprinted by permission of Faber and Faber Limited.

Donald H. Graves, *Build a Literate Classroom* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1991), p. 183.

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